



National Environmental
Laboratory Accreditation
Conference

DATE: May 8, 2000
FROM: Dr. Jim Pearson, NELAC Chair
TO: NELAP Accrediting Authorities
SUBJECT: Announcement of NELAP Accredited Laboratories

In an emergency meeting today, the NELAC Board of Directors voted to modify the goal for announcing the NELAP accredited laboratories from July 2000 to January 2001. This decision was made in response to your recommendation regarding the lack of time allowed to comply with the proficiency testing (PT) requirements. All the Board members had been eagerly anticipating the announcement of the NELAP accredited laboratories during NELAC VI, as had the rest of environmental laboratory community. Although we are disappointed in the postponement, we believe that it is more important to assure the integrity of the program than to meet the July 2000 goal.

The Board received similar recommendations from the Proficiency Testing Committee, and concerns were also relayed to the board from the laboratory community. This decision was based primarily on three factors: 1) the complete list of needed PT samples was not posted on the NELAC website until April, 2) the schedule for some of the PT studies did not provide sufficient time to analyze a third sample in the case of a failed analysis, and 3) the requirement for every analyte to be present in all but NIST approved fields of testing was not well understood.

A modification of the PT requirements for this first round of applicant laboratories was considered, but no mechanism is currently available to alter the standards, even in the event of an emergency or a recognized impracticality. This same barrier prevented changes to the PT schedule to include analyses made prior to July '99 as offered by the Transition Committee last summer. Since the solution to change the PT requirements was not possible, the next best step was to allow the laboratories more time to comply with the PT requirements. The Board will be recommending a change in Chapter One of the NELAC standards to allow greater flexibility to address an issue such as this one in the future.

The Board appreciates your raising this issue. This was not a popular decision, but was deemed the most appropriate considering the circumstances. Please notify all laboratories applying for NELAP accreditation about the extension of time. Feel free to transmit this memo to the laboratories, regulated industry, or the general public.

This decision will result in some problems for laboratories that planned to rely on NELAP accreditation through reciprocity starting July 2000. Accreditation for some of these laboratories will expire between July of 2000 and January of 2001. Please let Jeanne Hankins know what a laboratory must do in your state if their accreditation lapses between July 2000 and January 2001 due to this change, and provide a contact name and phone number to call if a laboratory has questions. This memo and the information you supply will be posted on the NELAC website. Thank you!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
JAMES L. PEARSON
Virginia Division of Consolidated
Laboratory Services
Richmond, VA

Past-Chair
KENNETH W. JACKSON
New York State Department of
Health
Albany, NY

Chair-Elect
CHARLES D. BROKOPP
Utah Department of Health
Salt Lake City, UT

Director
JEANNE HANKINS
United States Environmental
Protection Agency
Research Triangle Park, NC

Executive Secretary, Acting
LISA DOUCET
United States Environmental
Protection Agency
Washington, DC

Member-at-Large
RONALD L. CADA
Colorado Department of Public
Health and Environment
Denver, CO

Member-at-Large
BARBARA A. FINAZZO
United States Environmental
Protection Agency
Edison, NJ

Member-at-Large
PAUL KIMSEY
California Department of Health
Services
Berkeley, CA

Member-at-Large
SYLVIA S. LABIE
Florida Department of
Environmental Protection
Tallahassee, FL

Member-at-Large
ANNE RHYNE
Texas Natural Resource
Conservation Commission
Austin, TX

Member-at-Large
JACKIE SAMPLE
United States Department of
Defense
Goose Creek, SC